NATO Secretly Zeroes in on Naught and Drafts a Blank

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PARIS, July 26—The McNamara, or doldrums, committee (as the working press has nicknamed it) held a secret meeting this morning and issued one of the least communicative communiques in the annals of diplomacy.

Today's example of the diplomatic art of saying nothing in a convincing fashion may well be the masterpiece of the genre—the Don Giovanni of diplomatic expression, so to speak.

The McNamara committee is the 10-nation group related to NATO in some fashion which no one has yet been able to define. Its ostensible function is to discuss participation in nuclear planning by non-nuclear nations. There is a strong suspicion that its real function is to hoodwink the Germans into thinking they are becoming associate members of the nuclear club, without really letting them get so much as a hangnail on the trigger.

Distinction of Size

The 10-nation group emitted no communique. The five-nation group that is a dependency of the 10-nation group and distinguished from it by being smaller, achieved today's eighteen-line chef d'oeuvre.

Nine lines tell who was present when. A fine air of nonchance inspires this passage, which notes that the ministers took advantage of their presence in Paris to meet.

Five lines said that they "concentrated their attention" on the subject tyey were told off to deal with, the role of the smaller allies in nuclear strategy. Two lines said they reviewed their porgress to date (this probably consumed little time) and gave additional instructions to their staffs.

Meat of Message

The final three lines were meaty. The 10 nations will meet again in Rome in September.

The only information that leaked out of the secret meeting described West German Defense Minister Kai-Uwe von Hassel as taking issue with reports of "sharp differences" between America and Germany at Monday's equally secret meeting of all NATO defense ministers. As nearly as could be discerned, he said there were no differences, only (naturally) disagreements.

There is some feeling tonight among newspapermen that the only secret the secret meeting had to hide was that it had nothing to hide. This is based on the fact that an unnamable spokesman from an unidentifiable country speaking unattributably to a hand-picked gaggle of journalists produced, from behind this elaborate protective screen, a calligraphic zero.